

Student Bond = Student Success: Categorizing opportunities for bonding to Prevent Truancy and Dropout

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Overview of presentation: If the culture of success is created and fostered where students bond to the environment and persons within the school, they will be successful. Social bonding or lack thereof has been determined as one reason students may disengage (dropout or truant) from the school environment. Social bonding for assessment purposes has been defined using Social Control theory's 4 measures of social bonding 1) Attachment, 2) Commitment, 3) Involvement, and 4) Belief. When social bond levels are high in the school environment and students, staff, and school administrators perceive this also to be true, the result is a decrease in the rates of disengaged students. However, many schools systems do not have an instrument to gauge these four measures of social bonding despite knowing they must be tracked. When done and done effectively schools can learn about staff and students' perceptions and be in a position to effectively identify where programming needs to be enhanced to keep students engaged in school. The results also aid administrators advocate for program presence in the school especially when in times of budget cuts programs are the first to go. The instrument is a 39 item survey that is then evaluated with answers categorized by the four measures resulting in statements of "**Very Effective**" (3.66-5.00), "**Effective**" (2.3 – 3.65), to "**Somewhat Effective**" (1.00 – 2.33).

Key Points of Discussion

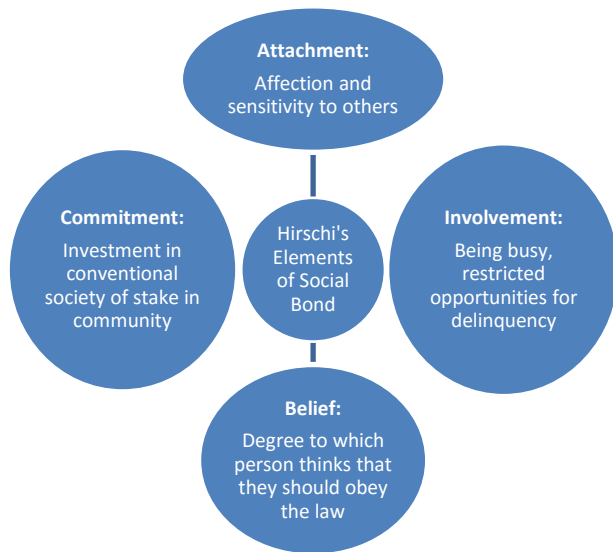
If it is "the way institutions relate to young people, and... [their contributions to the] process that creates youthful deviance, then it is these institutions that must be corrected, not the young who are its casualties" (Polk and Schafer, 1972, p. 7)

Categories of truants (Reid, 1999)

- **Traditional** – shy, has low self-concept, miss school for social conditions
- **Psychological** – lazy, ill, fear of a person, miss school for emotional factors
- **Institutional** – often leaders, head own peer group, and are generally not physically absent from school; miss school for school contextual factor
- **Recreational** – activity, incomplete assignments, etc.
- **Life-style truants** – marginal member, give bare minimum, believe it is their right to skip school, emotionally and physically detached for many reasons, and are more prone to dropping out

3 types of truants (Reid, 1999)

1. **Specific lesson absence** – (students skip a particular class, i.e. Math, English or PE)
2. **Post registration truant** – (students register for class as present then leave)
3. **Parental-condoned truant** – (parent agrees child can miss school of various reasons)
 - Current research often lumps all of these students together as truants.



Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969)

- Major theory to understand delinquency
- Examine connections to people in the creation of relationships
- Considered 1st theory to examine school social bond as primary predictor of delinquency
- 4 elements of social bond
 - **Attachment**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Involvement**
 - **Belief**

± Higher presence of 4 elements, higher the level of social bonding

Closing: Much of this work links also to students' belief in their own abilities to complete school related tasks. The research on school competence is suggesting that much needs to be done in this unexplored area in delinquency and dropout.

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS - OUTPUT framework

- **Outcomes**
- **Unit of Responsibility**
- **Treatment/Intervention**
- **Preferred Strategies & Costs**
- **Unit of Analysis (*Recipients*)**
- **Timeframe**

References

- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkley, CA: University of California.
- Reid, K. (1999). *Truancy and schools*. NY: Routledge.
- Rumberger, R.W. (1987). High school drop-outs: A review of issues and evidences. *Review of Education Research*, 57, 101-122.
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